

Charter. A preliminary step towards the Alliance was taken in March 1948, when Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty for their mutual defence; the strength and resources of North America, however, were needed to balance the strength of the Soviet Union. Negotiations for the North Atlantic Treaty began in July, among Italy, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, the United States, Canada and the Brussels Treaty powers. The Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 1949. Greece and Turkey joined the Alliance in 1951 and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1954.

Terms of the Treaty

The Articles of the Treaty deal in particular with its relation to the Charter of the United Nations, the responsibility of member countries to each other in non-military and military matters (including common defence), and with the duration of the Treaty and its implementation.

In the preamble and in Article 1, the parties emphasize their continuing support for the United Nations and undertake (in accordance with the United Nations Charter) to settle international disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the threat of use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purpose of the United Nations. Canada is often considered to be the originator of Article 2, which states that "the parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being". Under this article, member countries also agreed to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and to encourage economic collaboration between member countries.

As regards common defence, Article 4 provides for consultation whenever "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened", and, under Article 5, members agree that an armed attack "against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered as attack against them all". Article 6 states that the armed attack described in Article 5 will include any attack on occupation forces in Europe. Hence an attack on the allied forces in West Berlin would be regarded by the NATO allies as an attack on themselves.

Article 9 of the Treaty provides for the establishment of a council of representatives of member countries, known as the North Atlantic Council, which is responsible for consultation on matters concerning the implementation of the Treaty and is able to meet promptly to carry out its responsibilities. In practice, there have generally been two meetings at the ministerial level each year, the annual meeting in December consisting of the ministers of foreign affairs, defence and finance from each country, and a smaller meeting each spring in the capital of a NATO country, consisting of the ministers of foreign affairs. Between these ministerial meetings, the permanent representatives of member countries sit on the Council to direct the day-to-day work of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its Secretariat. The Council is assisted by a series of committees and agencies covering a wide range of common interests.